



Edinburgh Theatre

Pieces of Eight

George Square Theatre

★★★★☆

Epitaph

Gilded Balloon Teviot

★★★★☆

Robert Dawson Scott

BEWARE of categories. The exquisite piece of drama which is *Epitaph* is listed under comedy in the Fringe programme. The charming piece of nonsense that is *Pieces of Eight*, which could be in the dance section, is under theatre.

Actually the latter is lucky to be listed at all since it was one of the shows that was due to appear in the new Wig Wam venue, which collapsed (financially, that is) before the festival began but after the Fringe programme had gone to press. The George Square Theatre, across the square from the Spiegeltent, where several of the homeless performers finished up, is not an ideal substitute even if you can find it.

Still, at least Sassy Mechanics, from Minnesota, are here, following their success with *Trick Boxing* last year and pursuing the same formula of comedy; lots of characters produced out of just a change in the voice and, er, lots of ball-room dancing, all rather beautifully executed.

The preposterous storyline, about a screenwriter pitching a movie which also has to promote a brand of oranges, need not detain us. The pleasure here is watching people who

are just fantastically good at what they do. It makes you wonder what Brian Sostek and Megan McClellan would do with something slightly more purposeful. Not that providing an hour's innocent entertainment is anything to be sniffed at.

Perhaps they need a writer like Christopher Durang, some of whose sparkling theatrical fragments are getting a neat little production from Skulduggery at the Underbelly in a portmanteau show called *Durang Durang*. But then again maybe not. Adrian Wenner and Ethan Sandler, the two performers in *Epitaph*, do it all themselves with even fewer props than the economical Sassy Mechanics. Identically dressed in plain white shirts and black trousers, they conjure everything, from a funeral to an animated character on the side of a bottle of pills, out just their voices and their body language. But in addition to brilliant timing and extraordinary physical precision they have an intriguing story line and structure.

The eponymous epitaph, and the opening funeral, are all for a wonderful girl called Georgia. And the play unfolds as a series of scenes featuring people who knew her or were affected by her remembering her. But as each character starts to recount the next anecdote, the actors morph into the characters in the anecdote in a kind of ever-receding reality. And within that, the script touches wittily and tellingly on love and loss.

Epitaph until Aug 30th: 0131 668 1633
Pieces of Eight until Sat: 0131 651 4200